France and Italy respectively. I had similarly to report that the Italian Ambassador had called on me that morning and handed me an urgent request from Italy in respect of food. He had given me a very bad account, from his personal experience during a recent visit to Italy, of the food situation there.

Members of the War Cabinet pointed out that even if the French harvest was below the normal, there must still be plenty of food in that country. There was no system of distribution in France comparable in its security or imperturbability to that which had been set up and was being applied in this country. The French demands amounted to a request that we should supply their deficiencies because the French Government was too weak to compel its peasantry to stop hoarding. Before long there would no doubt be real need in France, which we should have to help, because the French Government had not established any satisfactory system of control or limitation of consumption which would result in effective economies, even to the same extent as the economies which we were effecting voluntarily in this country. We decided that a careful examination of the facts must be first made before the terms of any pooling of food resources could be determined.

French failure of hoarding

Five days later, on 30th October, 1917, Mr. Balfour reported to the War Cabinet that preliminary in-

vestigation showed the food situation in *Grave food* jtajy to be reaiiy serious. The collapse
Italy^e m °^ Caporetto had taken place while our
previous discussion had been in progress, and though we were now arranging for strong
military aid to Italy, it would be of little use if